

GALATIANS PART 17

GAL. 4:27-31

Last week we began looking at the end of chapter 4 from verses 21-31. There was so much to cover in this section that I split it into two parts.

Last week, we covered verses 21-26. Let me briefly recap last week's sermon for those of you who may not have heard the first part.

In these verses, Paul continues to explain the doctrine of grace and the freedom and liberty found in therein. He also emphasized in these two chapters that the Law is a master and that those who are bound to live under it are, for all intents and purposes, slaves to the Law.

Throughout chapters 3 & 4, Paul has reminded his readers about the promise God made to Abraham of a son and a nation that would be more in number than the sands of the shore.

He also has reminded them that Abraham believed God and that his faith was counted by God as righteousness, so that all those who come to Christ by faith are the true children of Abraham.

Now, Paul once again makes reference back to the beginning of the history of Israel, not to Abraham, but to...

- Sarah, the wife of Abraham and the mother of Isaac, the son born through the promise, and the father of the Jews
- Hagar, the slave girl who also gave birth to a son by Abraham – a slave child named Ishmael, born not of the promise but of the flesh, the father of the nations we generally refer to as Arabs.

Paul did not tell the story of Sarah and of Hagar as they happened in history and as they are recorded in Scripture, but used them as

an allegory to make his point concerning the contrast between the Law and the grace of God.

Hagar (24,25).....	Sarah
Mt. Sinai (24,25).....	Mt. Zion
bondwoman (22,23,30,31).....	free woman (22,23,30,31)
slave children (24,25,31).....	free children
old covenant of Law (24).....	new covenant of promise (24)
slavery (24,25,31).....	freedom (26,31: 5:1)
earthly Jerusalem (25).....	Jerusalem above (26)
Jews, Judaizers.....	Christians of all nations

Gal. 4:26 But the Jerusalem above (represented by Sarah) is free, and she is our mother.

The question at this point was no longer "Who is your father?" because both Isaac and Ishmael – both the Jews and the Arabs – could claim Abraham as their father.

The question now becomes, "Who is your mother?"

Now, in verse 27, Paul continued with his use of allegory to make clear the contrast between the Law and grace.

Read verses 27-31.

In **verse 27**, Paul quotes from Isaiah 54.1.

In the original context of Isaiah, this verse was an encouraging prophecy to the Jews in exile in Babylon that, following the end of their exile, the nation of Israel would grow numerically as it never did before the Exile and would experience immeasurable blessings from God.

Once again, Paul took a verse out of context from the OT and allegorized it, applying this verse to the relationship between Law and grace.

Remember that, in Paul's allegory, Hagar is representative of the nation of the Jews as well as these Judaizers who are bound under the Law – as slaves of the Law.

Sarah – even though she is the mother of Isaac, the father of the Jews – in the allegory represents the freedom found in the grace of God. She is the heavenly Jerusalem, made up of people from every nation, including both the Jews and non-Jews.

Sarah is the one who was barren and desolate – the one whose womb had never produced a child.

For almost 100 years she had been barren, but by the miracle of the grace of God, she gave birth to Isaac.

When we read the verse 27, at first there is some confusion, because Hagar could never refer to Abraham as her husband. She was a slave – a woman of utility – used by her master to achieve his own selfish purpose.

Here is where we have to dig a little deeper to discover what Paul is really saying.

In our English Bibles, the end of verse 27 refers to “she which hath an husband (KJV)” or “the one who has a husband (ESV).”

According to Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, in the original text, the indefinite article “an” is actually the definite article “the” so that the end of the verse could actually be read, “the one who has the husband.”

Thus this phrase refers once again to Hagar whose child was “born of the flesh.”

Remember that this is not just a reference to the fact that her child was born by the natural process of having been in an intimate relationship with Abraham, but that the child was born according to a plan devised, not by God, but by Sarah.

Even so, remember that Hagar represents Israel.

If we return to Isaiah 54, we discover that the husband of Israel is God.

Read Isaiah 54.2-5a

In this part of Paul's allegory, the woman which has a husband refers to the Jews, the nation to whom the Law was given.

The entire book of Hosea concerns the adulterous wife of Jehovah – the rebellious and idolatrous nation of Israel.

The barren woman of verse 37 refers to the heavenly city of Jerusalem – to the Jerusalem of the new covenant – the covenant of grace which encompasses all of the nations and people groups of the world, both Jews and non-Jews, who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

The nations and peoples of the world had neither the privileges of Israel, the wife of God who loved her and chose her, nor the intimacy with His love required for bearing offspring.

Thus the nations of the world are barren and desolate, as Sarah was barren and desolate before giving birth to Isaac.

Now, however, the unfaithful wife has been temporarily set aside, and God has set about the business of creating the perfect bride of Christ – the church – made up of people from every tribe and tongue, every people and nation.

The numbers of the redeemed will, by the end of time, have vastly outnumbered the descendants of Abraham in the flesh.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Gen. 12.1-3.

Christ has come bringing salvation by grace through faith to all people everywhere – including those members of the churches of Galatia.

Paul continues in...

Verse 28

Thus the true descendants of Abraham who have come to God through faith in Christ will certainly outnumber those who limit the membership of God's kingdom to those who are Jewish or who become Jewish.

Remember that Abraham had looked hopefully toward Ishmael as the son that God had promised him. He soon learned otherwise, but that did not prevent Abraham from loving his own son, who was certainly circumcised and part of the covenant people of God.

By this time, Ishmael would have been nearly 16 years old, even though the Bible refers to him as a child or a lad. That means that he was of the age when young men left their families, married wives and started families of their own.

Being cast out of the camp did not mean that Hagar and Ishmael were no longer under the covenant of Abraham. Their departure did not automatically exclude them from "the privileges of communion with God."

If Hagar and Ishmael became separated from the God of Abraham, it was by their own design. God did not turn His back on them. In fact, God promised that He would protect Hagar and Ishmael and that he would also be the father of a great nation.

So if they became separated from the covenant and the blessings of God, it was because they apparently turned their backs on him, separating themselves from the grace of God.

Now remember that, in Paul's analogy, Hagar represents the Jews – and more specifically, these Judaizers – Jews who claimed to be Christians who insisted on requiring non-Jewish converts to be circumcised and to keep the Law in order to be justified by God.

By making the decision to change or to add to the gospel of grace, they remained bound under the confines and the curse of the Law, and thus separated from the grace of God.

Hagar represents the Jewish nation because, like Hagar and Ishmael, they have rejected the grace of God and continue to live as if they were children of the slave woman, Hagar, instead of the free woman, Sarah.

Verse 29

Gen. 21:8 When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. 9 But Sarah saw Ishmael – the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar (now about 15-16 years old) – making fun of (laughing at) her son, Isaac. 10 So she turned to Abraham and demanded, "Get rid of that slave-woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won't have it!"

Just as Ishmael laughed at, made fun of, and in the words of Paul persecuted Isaac, so these false teachers from the Jews are guilty of persecuting the Galatian believers by requiring them to do something to earn their salvation.

Paul has a ready remedy for how the Galatian believers are to reach to this false teaching of the Judaizers.

Verse 30

The idiom "crossing the Rubicon" means to pass a point of no return, and refers to Julius Caesar's leading his army across the Rubicon in 49 BC on his way to conquering Rome.

One commentator referred to this verse as the Rubicon of Paul's message. Here is a clear and decisive break between Christianity and the Jews. They had been given their chance, but had rejected the promised Messiah along with the grace of God.

So Paul told the Galatian believers, "You are to cast out these false teachers. Break fellowship with them. Do not give them any more opportunity to persecute you with their false gospel.

"You may have developed feelings for them and it may be painful to make the break, but it must be done."

The Jews – and specifically these Judaizers – take great pride in the fact that they are the sons of Abraham. And certainly they are. The problem is that they are not the sons of Sarah, but the sons of Hagar, the slave woman.

Verse 31

Just as the son of promise was not Ishmael, the son of the slave woman, but Isaac, the son of the free woman, the truth is not found in the teachings of the Jews or of these Judaizers, but in the gospel of grace by the faith of Jesus Christ.

Lehman Strauss

Like Isaac, we have been supernaturally born into God's family by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Isaac was a child of promise and of faith, and as such he is a type of every true believer who has his standing before God, not on the ground of being a descendant from Abraham, but upon the grace bestowed to Abraham.

The gospel of grace that Christ himself had personally delivered to Paul and the message that Paul had taught to the Galatians said...

Salvation comes from Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone.

Eph. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.